

WORK THAT MATTERS: Tending to Chicana/Latina Studies as Home

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Chicana feminist praxis drives the work of *Chicana/Latina Studies: The Journal of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social* (MALCS), in which we celebrate multiple forms of knowing and creating. As a critical intellectual, creative, and political space, the journal stages conversations necessary to the development of liberatory ways of thinking and being in the multiple worlds we navigate. The issue you now hold in your hands evidences the ways in which we come together across disciplines to produce necessary interdisciplinary and cross-genre critical and creative work. Volume thirteen, issue two houses the focused issue on institutional violence, and we want to situate it within the context of Chicana/Latina Studies; this issue is the largest to date. In these pages, we bring together our editorial vision for the journal as a whole, together with the work of the MALCS Ad Hoc Committee on Institutional Violence. The first section articulates the ongoing work of the journal, through critical and creative writing in dialogue with the sections that follow, which is constituted by writing solicited by the Ad Hoc Committee. The artwork of Deborah Kuetzpal Vasquez bridges the various sections of the issue, with Citlali, The Chicana Superhero, embodying the fuerza of our feminista commitments and consciousness. We acknowledge the Ad Hoc Committee for their vision, their passion, and their desire to make this issue a reality. For the final product and the energies that went into its production, we recognize the collective efforts of many who have labored behind the scenes such as members of the national advisory and editorial boards as mentors and reviewers.

I. Resilience, Persistence, and Change: Shifting and Contesting Traditions

The first section of this issue articulates the collaboration that characterizes our editorial vision. The contents of this section originated both in-house and from contributions put forward by the Ad Hoc Committee. Part of the work we do as editors is through juxtaposition and ordering: placing these pieces together allows us to situate the focused issue as part of an ongoing and institutionalized Chicana/Latina resistance (as the journal of MALCS) to the heteropatriarchal violence so compellingly articulated by the committee. For example, the two book reviews by Yvette Flores and Larissa M. Mercado-López, which spotlight Chicanas with careers in science, mathematics, and engineering, and the intersections of race and class for women in academia, respectively, document our presence and persistence in institutions of higher education. In “The Staging of Heteropatriarchal Violence and its Traumatic Aftermath in Adelina Anthony’s *Bruising for Besos* and Dulce Maria Solis’ *CHELA*,” Tiffany Ana López explores the ways in which the playwrights use testimonios to define and document heteropatriarchal violence. Because the performative aspect is vital to these interventions, López employs dramaturgical analysis to discuss how the authors and performers understand the liberatory and potentially transformative aspects of the drama.

That the work of three Tejanas: Irene Lara Silva, Amalia Ortiz, and San Antonio’s own poet laureate, Carmen Tafolla, is featured in this issue stands as a testament to the importance of the home-place of the journal, as well as the communal ties that are developed both within and beyond its pages. Along with the inimitable Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs, and the artist/activist collective malintZINE, these poets speak directly to the theme of the focused issue. Two of them document and critique various forms of institutional violence. MalintZINE’s “De/Romantic Revolutions” is a commentary on heteropatriarchal sexual violence and objectification from within the ranks of supposed allies, while Ortiz’s

“Eight-Liners” makes clear the ways in which economic exploitation and state-sanctioned violence deeply and intimately felt by women, working class, and poor people in South Texas. Gutiérrez y Muhs’s poetic offerings, “Foreign” and “Downloadable” address the pain and resistance of asserting one’s belonging in the here and now, as flesh and blood. As well, Tafolla and Lara Silva also invoke the body’s physical and psychic response to illness and pain that is the result of historical and structural forms of violence. In their work, they offer us forms of healing in community with bodies larger than our own: in collectives, with ancestors, and with the elements.

II. Focused Issue: Institutional Heteropatriarchal Violence and the Future of Chican@ Studies

This section of the issue brings to fruition several years of work by the MALCS Ad Hoc Committee on Institutional Violence. The contributions expose the microaggressions and sociocultural inequalities that play out in academia and beyond it; they document and strategize forms of resistance and solidarity. Much of the writing here pushes and complicates generic conventions of scholarly writing. Mainstream forms, such as the essay, are supplemented by testimonios, research reports, and a roundtable conversation. The relationship between the form and content of our writing is a carefully wrought one, and the Chicana/Latina feminist articulations in the focused issue take up this question deliberately. Naming and terminology, for example, are a conceptual thread that runs through many of these pieces. As previously noted in the editorial articulation of the journal’s title, names matter, as “language has the potential to confirm and grant inequality, exclusion, and distance” (Davalos and Partnoy, 2004, 9). Whether we call ourselves Chicano, Chicana/o, Latina/o, Chican@ or Latin@ is a deliberate lexical choice that functions to counter discursive forms of erasure and violence under white supremacy and heteropatriarchy. That choice varies

across this issue, and the launch essay jointly composed by the committee, “Ending Heteropatriarchal Institutional Violence in Chicano Studies: A Reflection on Our Path” articulates what is at stake in the choosing. They offer Chican@ as a way to contest the binary oppositions that undergird heteropatriarchal nomenclature, similar to the way Sandra K. Soto does in *Reading Chican@ Like A Queer: The Demastery of Desire*. Situating the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Institutional Violence within the context of MALCS and NACCS, this opening essay offers a working definition of institutional violence in order to sustain an ongoing conversation that will affirm the voices, honor the lives, and strengthen the communities that work to resist and transform this form of oppression.

Using the personal as a springboard from which to make an intervention in the field of Chicana/o Studies, “Transgender Chican@ Poetics: Contesting, Interrogating, and Transforming Chicana/o Studies” by Francisco J. Galarte brings our attention to transgender issues. It centers subjectivity as a critical lens to examine and attend to the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality necessary to liberatory scholarship. In her research report, “Institutional Academic Violence: Racial and Gendered Microaggressions in Higher Education,” Bert Maria Cueva asks us to think about what counts as theory. Based on testimonios by Chicana and Indigenous women, this writing articulates their experiences of institutional violence via microaggressions in higher education. From the perspective of the highest administrative position in academia, Rusty Barceló’s “Through A President’s Eyes” also addresses resistance and hostility, and documents how she herself has been targeted because of her position. Fully engaged in struggles to move beyond mere inclusion, Barceló urges us to create a critical mass necessary to transform these institutions. In their autohistorias, Marie “Keta” Miranda and Norma Alarcón reflect on their respective experiences as activist scholars, and experiment in their writing to

articulate the various forms of knowledge created from a lifetime in academe. In “Re-Membering Emotion: Bigotes and the Unblocking of Memory,” Miranda writes about the recovery of memory in order to challenge the erasure and invisibility of Chicana feminist resistance and subjectivity. In “Conjugations: The Insurrections of Subjugated Knowledges and Exclusionary Practices” Alarcón offers us a way to bring together many of the elements in the previous pieces in this section. In it, she articulates the intellectual and the sociopolitical grounds at stake, which is nothing less than the preservation of our own selves, providing an apt launch into the following section that focuses on survival strategies.

The next section of the focused issue “Performing, Unpacking, and Problematizing Violence: Strategies for Survival and Resilience in Chicano Studies,” makes interventions in the field while offering strategies for resistance and coalition building in order to transform the institutions in which we work. It begins with Martha D. Escobar’s essay, “Teaching Ethnic Studies in Times of Perpetual Racialized Warfare,” which explores what it means for Ethnic Studies teachers that their students, and often they themselves, form part of the racialized communities under siege in the social reorganization that followed the advances gained by the Civil Rights Movement. She makes a compelling case for the adoption of abolitionist pedagogies as a crucial site of resistant praxis. Following this engagement with teaching and our work in academia, Ana Clarissa Rojas Durazo’s “Resistance Acts Until We Are Free: Transforming Heteropatriarchal Violence in/and Chican@ Studies” examines the colonial and contemporary forms of colonialist knowledge formations that produce violence which threatens the sustainability of our communities of resistance. This essay, as well as the jointly authored testimonio essay by Rojas Durazo, Audrey Silvestre, and Nadia Zepeda, “Chicana Feminist Praxis: Community Accountability Coalitions in the University” suggest strategies of “community accountability engaging different sectors of the university in our aim to contest and transform institutional

violence.” In a similar gesture of coalition building, Amrah Salomón J. and Natalia Thompson bridge the community-academic divide. In “When Social Media Become Social Justice: Denuncias inside/outside Chicano/a Studies,” Salomon concentrates on zines, social media, public spaces and community accountability practices to articulate how community activism can support gender justice within Chicana/o Studies programs. Performing another kind of bridging, “Construyendo complicidades, respaldando resistencias: A Roundtable Discussion on Institutional Violence in Latin American Universities” stages an un-translated Spanish-language roundtable conversation with Latin American scholars. Thompson articulates this authorial decision as a way to preserve the “interlocutors epistemologies of voice.” In this conversation, she interrogates the absence of Chicana and Latina feminists in the work of Latin American scholars whose library holdings are Eurocentric. In this experimental piece, Thompson questions the “costs of the institutionalization of feminist theorizing, as well as the perils of discursive colonization.” Closing this section with this hybrid piece complicates and extends our focus outward to consider forms of resistance to heteropatriarchal and racialized institutional violence in a transnational Latina feminist context. We have accomplished much with the various pieces published in this focused issue, and many conversations will emerge from the work presented in this section. Evidenced by the Ad Hoc Committee’s commitment to this work, their efforts portend continued focus on institutional violence in all its nuanced forms.

**Bridging and Curating Art on the Page:
Theorizing through Creative Expressions**

This issue is graced by the art of Debora Kuetzpal Vasquez, a San Antonio native, whose cover design speaks to the ways in which women contend with violence in their everyday lives and in response, reclaim ancestral knowledge that reframes our notions of *lo cotidiano* as restorative cultural practice. A scholar-activist who relies on her artistic expression to

articulate the unending interventions we must engage to create a free and safe environment, she perceives education as a lifelong process. Vasquez relies on lessons imparted by strong women in her ancestral lineage. About her work, which includes ceramics, painting/drawings, digital/video, soft sculpture, and installation, she offers: "My work combines tradition and contemporary art-making techniques with ethnic popular culture subject matter. For me, scholarly interests and artistic endeavors can merge...[and] also be separated in our global practices, even when undercurrents shape the flow within the work." With her pieces, she articulates a domesticana sensibility theorized by Amalia Mesa-Bains (a particularly feminist vision of *rasquache* aesthetics), repurposing not only art-making materials, but also generic forms such as the portrait and the comic strip. Portraiture in the Americas has its roots in colonial practices, depicting Spanish aristocracy, religious figures, and wealthy patrons as the only subjects worthy of display. Drawing on this tradition together with the iconographic representation of Catholic saints, Vasquez takes Chicana/o cultural figures like Gloria E. Anzaldúa and Raul R. Salinas, and transforms them into saintly guides. They remind us to retrieve our voices in the ambiguity of *nepantla* or in the ravages of diabetes, or prison in the walls that impose limits on our actions and strip us of our humanity. Vasquez takes us on a journey of those departed body/spirits who have and continue to pave the way toward self-understanding, as she makes visible their contributions to society. Similarly, she appropriates the comic strip, originally a commercial form of popular culture, to Chicana feminist ends. Citlalita, the child version of Citlali the Chicana Superhero, bears witness and strength in her family, as she and her mother support Citlalita's abuela to resolve the domestic violence (rooted in mental health and substance abuse issues) committed by her abuelo.

From her portraits, to her comic strips, to her drawing of *las siete guerrilleras*—the curative foods of our ancestors—to the spiritual *limpias* and cooking practices she shares with the community, as well as through her installations and in other creative ways, Vasquez disseminates knowledge about our material, physical, psychological, intellectual, and spiritual worlds. Moreover, she makes us see the possibilities in the creation of change, relying on the power embodied in Citlalita and her adult counterpart, Citlali (Vasquez's alter egos) to go back in time and into the future, to inspire us on the path to change.

In the sections that follow, in the spirit of collaboration and because of the special nature of this particular issue, we want to give space for the singular voice within the collective. In our last joint editorial statement, each of us will, in the sections that follow, articulate our particular voices and visions, and then come together in the conclusion.

Archival Path of Expression: Josie Méndez Negrete

With deep roots in multiple artistic communities, particularly in San Antonio where I reside, during my tenure *Chicana/Latina Studies* became the archival venue by which artists had the opportunity to display their creative works. Three artists come to mind who showed us that despite whatever limitations they confronted as individuals, the energy and passion of art could be another way of narrating our stories and blessing our path to social change. First Ann Marie López paved the way for our last editorial transition. Enedina Casares Vasquez, a spiritual activist and guide, shared work that bridged the loss of Arturo Vasquez, artist partner and husband, displaying pieces that paved the way to her healing from the loss. Gloria H. Cuádriz, a brilliant scholar and artist, allowed me to feature her work to illustrate the creative ways we rely on to deal with the stresses and traumas of our daily and scholarly trajectory.

Trauma is not the only source of inspiration for the artists we have published; political contestation and resistance to oppression often are sources of inspiration. In her work, Liliana Wilson conveys a sociopolitical analysis of the everyday with “a message that exposes difficult circumstances ... and events that happen to [people] because of scarcity of socioeconomic circumstances and because of who they are and where they originate” (Wilson 10, 2:10). Más Rudas, the first art collective featured in the journal, and who in their very name contest and challenge society state, “Our multi-media installations are educational, promote dialogue, confront the traditional canon of art, and create a space to address our personal and social identities” (Más Rudas, 11, 2:10). During my five-year tenure as Lead Editor, we have highlighted and illustrated Chicana/Latina feminist visions of the journal in its scholarly, creative, and artistic contributions, promoting and making visible Chicana and Latina artists. For example, volume twelve, issue two, which featured Margaret Garcia’s art on the cover, sold a record 648 copies.

San Antonio, a center of Chicana/Latina artistic production readily embraced the work of the journal as a site of expression. Recognized as a tourist destination, San Antonio’s place in the artistic production in the national scene is still evolving, particularly as it pertains to Chicanas/Latinas. For this reason, we primarily highlighted their work, though we also have included artists from Austin, Los Angeles, and Phoenix. From Los Angeles, we featured the photographs of Claudia D. Hernández who provided a visual transnational gaze on Latinas, as a Latina/Chapina. With the works of these artists, in addition to illustrating the Chicana/Latina feminist vision of the journal, I brought into display Chicana/Latina images and sensibilities not previously present in the visual work of the journal.

In the journal, a nurturing and mentoring space, we promoted the work of artists who later received national recognition. For example, Adriana M.J.

Garcia and Veronica Castillo received national recognition. Garcia received \$15,000 in a national ad campaign detailing the skyline and cultural life of San Antonio, which featured performers associated with the city. Castillo was the first Mexican-born artist awarded the Heritage Fellowship, \$25,000 from the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA). The first clay artist to be inducted into this prestigious group of artists, Castillo brought recognition to the four generations of artists on whose shoulders she stands. Through the vision of the journal and with my support, we have created a community site that supports the artistic expression of Chicanas and Latinas.

I depart impassioned and inspired by the creative works, artistic expressions, and theoretical knowledges we have created in the publication of *Chicana/Latina Studies*—Chicana/Latina scholars have definitely carved a place in academia. The past five years have produced incomparable knowledge by women of color whose contributions display love and passion. As Lead Editor, I broke new ground: for the first time in the history of *Chicana/Latina Studies*, the journal published a Chicano feminist scholar, William A. Calvo-Quirós. His essay, “The Politics of Color (Re)Signification: Chromophobia, Chromo-Eugenics, and the Epistemologies of Taste,” centers on Chicana and Latina feminist scholarship and cultural production (13, 1:76-116). Calvo-Quirós follows our citational footprints, invoking Tiffany Ana López’s phrase, to theorize a decolonial response to Eurocentric aesthetics and epistemologies. In a similar sort of watershed moment for the journal’s feminist community of scholars, activists, and artists, this focused issue’s contents features another man’s voice: Francisco J. Galarte’s essay, “Transgender Chican@ Poetics: Contesting, Interrogating, and Transforming Chicana/o Studies,” raises the question of when and how trans-queer folks fit into familiar models of community and intellectual discourse. *Chicana/Latina Studies: The Journal of MALCS* is an intellectual and communal space, and conversations about how we come together in this home are worth

having. These questions, about who lives here, are important because they help us to articulate an intentional and liberatory community.

Always one to believe that if you imagine it, it will happen, I started this journey with the belief that I could lead our interdisciplinary flagship journal. Thus, basking in the luxury of possibilities, I took on the privilege of merging the many loves I cherish in my academic life, as I set out to promote our research, display our creative works, and exhibit our artistic expressions. I relished the challenge—*me sentía como en un mundo encantado*—eager to move our incomparable journal forward with the aim of continuing the legacy of MALCS. The challenges have been many, but none that have dissuaded me from doing “work that matters,” as Gloria E. Anzaldúa inspires us to believe.

The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) has hosted Chicana/Latina Studies—the flagship, interdisciplinary peer-reviewed, twice-yearly publication of *Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social*—for the past five years. Beginning with volume nine, issue one, as the Lead Editor of the journal, responsible for the final production and fiscal decisions, I have exercised judicious and inclusive editorial practices. We have honored the feminist structures and guidelines of the journal, including the initial assessment of submissions to ensure that manuscripts meet journal expectations. I have endeavored to adhere to our vision at each stage of production: from the initial assessment to confirm that submissions follow citational footprints and engage scholarship in the field, to engaging in double blind-review processes, through to decisions to accept, reject, or assign to mentorship. At every turn, we have tried to focus our actions on building bridges between community and university settings—with the aim of transforming higher education—as we promote liberatory ways of thinking and understanding. I leave my post assured with the knowledge that its new home will continue to create expressive communities that speak to the journal’s vision.

The journal's transition to Arizona State University, beginning fall 2014, under the leadership of Gloria H. Cuádriz and C. Alejandra Elenes, brings to a close years of work made possible only with the support of UTSA's Dean Betty Merchant at the College of Education and Human Development. Throughout our tenure, we created a space of transcommunitality whereby we expanded our membership and our distribution increased to 500 issues, while making interdisciplinary connections. To evidence that there is a place in the making and doing of our scholarship, we implemented scaffold mentoring, whereby each person (graduate, undergraduate, and community members) learns from one another, where regardless of title, everyone's contributions are valid. As I wrote in my first editorial commentary:

Scaffold mentoring is premised on the belief that, regardless of title, all have contributions to make...this process, while empowering, is not permanent or static...it bridges the cultural wealth students bring into the creation of knowledge. Scaffold mentoring is a transitory strategy that helps students hone potential areas of growth and build on their strength...[where] all do their part to achieve the best possible outcome (Méndez-Negrete, 9, 1: 33).

Reciprocal and mutualistic approaches to learning necessarily merged the skills that students brought with them, as well as those they gained in the production of the journal. Milestones achieved among those who worked with us include the completion of undergraduate and graduate degrees. Others are preparing to attend graduate school.

Twenty-five years after attending my first summer institute, I am ready to transition into a new relationship with *Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social*. Mil gracias to the people I have worked alongside—you have made

possible the production and distribution of the journal--the *Colectivas* at UTSA, University of California, Riverside, and Loyola Marymount University, under the leadership of Tiffany Ana López and Eliza Rodríguez y Gibson, respectively. At UTSA, the journal rested on the invaluable contributions of Sandra D. Garza, Enid “Libby” Atilano, Jennifer Ojeda, Crystal Serrano, Yasmina Codina, My Ngoc Le, Crystal Poenisch, Timothy Garcia-Giddens, and Jobana Tavera. We also benefitted from the professional work and support of Ashlee Goodwin’s design and layout, the copy editing eyes of Aimee Donaldson, Rachel Jennings, and Chandra Howard, and the proofreading of Annemarie Perez.

The accomplishments the journal has achieved would not have been possible without the support, commitment, and passion of those who worked with us to produce every issue. Scholars, artists, and writers who shared their talents gave us the intellectual and academic capital necessary to expand our pages and distribution. *Mil gracias*, I give to each person who supported us by becoming members of the organization, trusting us with your work, subscribing, and donating funds to the journal—you have made the journal a publication of first choice. For her mentoring and support, I thank Karen Mary Davalos. National Advisory and Editorial Board members, and every reviewer and mentor who worked with authors to usher final manuscripts into being, you have my eternal gratitude. Drs. Cuádras and Elenes, for your commitment and vision, I thank you for taking charge of the journal. To those with whom I worked, and those who supported me throughout the process, I will forever remain humble and appreciative of your generosity.

Reflecting on lessons learned, it is our collective endeavors and our reflexive relationships and interactions with each other that matter. More than that, we must frame our labor inside a place of love so that we never lose our humanity. Thus, with each step we take in our respective institutions and communities,

we advance the struggle against institutional violence—collectively and individually. We cannot rest on our laurels. Our accomplishments do not release us from the compromiso we have toward those who walk our path. ¡Siempre adelante y mil gracias!

Life, Work, and Chicana Feminism: Eliza Rodriguez y Gibson

At a recent conference on Latina/o literature, it was my privilege to take part in a roundtable conversation about Chicana feminism in academia, with mujeres from across the ranks of the profession, from doctoral student to full professor. As each of us articulated, in the space of a few minutes, what Chicana feminism means, several of us were moved to tears. Our work, our struggle, matters to our lives: it emerges from the interplay between our scholarship and our everyday experiences. My editorial vision for the journal comes from engaging with and learning from Chicana and Latina writers and artists. Bringing critical and creative work together has long been characteristic of the production of knowledge in Chicana/Latina feminism. The journal creates a space for this, our “life-work” (to borrow from Sonia Saldivar-Hull’s comments at the roundtable I mentioned earlier). In this, our final editorial statement, I want to contextualize my editorial collaboration with Josie as part of this trabajo. Over the past two years, since I have come on board, I have been mentored generously and been the beneficiary of not only her editorial and professional experience, but also of Josie’s tremendous friendship and collegial goodwill. Of course, over the course of these two years, life, as they say, happens. While I settled into a new position at Loyola Marymount University, I joined as co-editor, and during the following year I went up for tenure; throughout all of this, the strength of Josie’s conviction and commitment to the work has modeled the fuerza necessary to this trabajo. We have made use of technology to work together across half a continent (as I write this, the video-chat window sits next to the live document in the cloud).

As an integral part of the transition, my part as co-editor is to facilitate the continuity of vision and to sustain the integrity and the mission of the journal as it relates to MALCS. I look forward to new collaborations. It is good work, and we are lucky to have it.

Work that Matters Continues

The history of the national organization and of the journal have been documented in previous issues, and are easily found on the website, www.malcs.org. Rather than rehearse those details, we want to underscore the criticality of the journal as a space of mentoring, and the way we institutionalize that healing space as an alternative to the forms of institutional violence that have been witnessed in these pages. Mentoring, as every mentor knows, is reciprocal. Those we support sustain us. The question of mentoring must be central as we think about how to heal those wounds that come from both historical and contemporary forms of violence and colonialism. The writing and the art produce salutary knowledge in their reciprocity to each other. The journal is not only, then, a communal space in which we come together to do this trabajo, but it also functions as a space of reciprocity and mutuality that is generous and generative. As a “fundamental sitio” of knowledge production and mentoring, the transition of the journal’s home is a moment in which we can reflect on the institutionalization of our intellectual and sociopolitical liberatory practices and commitments (Méndez-Negrete and López 11, 1:32). When forms of violence and oppression are institutionalized, so must our resistance be imagined in alternative structures!

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